

Carers

Executive Summary

A carer is someone who regularly provides unpaid care for someone who is disabled, frail, ill, has mental health issues or substance misuse problems. Without this support, many of those individuals being cared for would require formal care packages or care home placements. The national economic contribution of carers is estimated at £87 billion per year.

There are significant health problems associated with being a carer. Those providing high levels of care are twice as likely to have poor health as those without caring responsibilities. A range of physical and mental health problems contribute to the poor health including physical strain, stress related illness such as high blood pressure, anxiety and depression.

The 2011 census recorded 22,313 unpaid carers in North Somerset. The proportion of the population who are carers in North Somerset is 11.1%, slightly higher than the national average of 10.3%. Of those who are providing unpaid care in North Somerset, 15,172 people (68%) are providing between 1 and 19 hours; 2,577 people (12%) provide between 20 and 49 hours; and 4,564 people (21%) provide over 50 hours.

Approximately 326 are young carers aged under 18. A higher concentration of young carers live in Weston-super-Mare. Expected rises in the numbers of over-65's and people with dementia over the next 5–10 years will see the number of carers in North Somerset increase.

A wide range of service provision exists for carers in the area and carers rate services as 'good'. However carers often do not identify themselves as carers, and are not aware of the whole range of services which could support them. Further work is needed to reach groups of carers with whom professionals have not yet engaged, including black and ethnic minority, gay and lesbian, and male carers.

Recommendations for consideration

Action is required to increase early identification of carers; reach groups of carers with whom professionals have not engaged; and publicise training opportunities to support them in providing care and returning to work.

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Why is this important?

A carer is someone who regularly provides unpaid care for someone who is disabled, frail, ill, has mental health issues or substance misuse problems.

Without their support many of those cared-for would require formal care packages or care home placements. In 2011 the economic value of the contribution made by carers nationally was estimated at £119 billion per year, more than total spending on the NHS¹. The impact of caring on an individual's health is well-documented². Those providing high levels of care are twice as likely to have poor health as those without caring responsibilities³. Factors contributing to poor health include physical illness including strain and factors related to stress (including high blood pressure and blood problems) and mental illness (including anxiety, depression, loss of confidence and self-esteem).

What are the needs of the population?

Nationally one in ten of the population are a carer⁴. The 2011 Census indicates that there are 22,313 carers in North Somerset, an increase of 2,875 from the 2001 Census. The proportion of the population providing unpaid care in North Somerset is 11.1%, slightly higher than the national average of 10.3% and the South West average of 10.8%.

Of these, 4,564 provide 50 hours or more care per week (see Table 1 below). At 27th February 2013, 326 young carers under 18 had been identified locally by the Young Carers' Support Service commissioned by North Somerset Council.

Table 1 – Hours of care provided by carers in North Somerset

	Number	Percentage
Carers providing 1 -19 hours of care per week	15,172	68.0
Carers providing 20 – 49 hours of care per week	2,577	11.5
Carers providing 50 or more hours of care per week	4,564	20.5
Total number of carers	22,313	100

Source: 2011 census

The Young Carers' Support Service reports a significantly higher concentrations of numbers of young carers in the Weston-super-Mare area. An estimated 68% live within the Weston South and East locality areas, 20% within Central District Area and 12% within North District area. Approximately 50% of currently active young carers are male and 50% female. A new support group for young carers in Portishead has seen an increase in the identification of young carers in that area.

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The over-65 population in North Somerset is expected to increase from 43,000 in 2011 to 50,200 in 2016. The number with dementia locally is expected to rise by 30.5% from 3,171 in 2007 to 4,240 in 2020⁵. The number of people with a limiting long-term illness is predicted to increase by 52% from 2008 to 2030⁶. The number of carers in the area can be predicted to rise in line with these figures.

Current services

It is vital that councils and the NHS acknowledge the role carers play and support them in sustaining this, to ensure that they do not become isolated or disadvantaged because of their role. In terms of doing this, the Government's November 2010 'refresh' of the National Carers Strategy 2008 identified the following priorities^{7,8}:

1. Supporting those with caring responsibilities to identify themselves as carers at an early stage, recognising the value of their contribution and involving them from the outset both in designing local care provision and in planning individual care packages.
2. Enabling those with caring responsibilities to fulfil their educational and employment potential.
3. Personalised support both for carers and those they support, enabling them to have a family and community life.
4. Supporting carers to remain mentally and physically well.

A wide range of support is available in North Somerset, as outlined below (this list is not exhaustive):

- Information and advice.
- Carers assessments.
- Direct Payments.
- A range of respite for the cared-for person enabling them to stay safe while the carer has a break, including sitting services, domiciliary support, care home placements, day centres and luncheon clubs.
- Short-term support for carers in an emergency by the Rapid Response and Rehabilitation Team.
- Specialist dementia provision including day care, luncheon clubs, domiciliary care, carer support groups, information sessions, Forget Me Not surgeries in 7 GP practices in North Somerset.
- The Young Carers Service - support groups, day trips, residential weekends, advocacy, one-to-one support, a schools worker for under 18s, a support group for young adult carers aged between 18 and 25.
- A range of support for parent carers of disabled children e.g. Family Link Scheme, support groups, home-based support.
- Telecare equipment which can prompt or monitor the cared-for person, some of which can act as an alert to the carer.

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- Emotional support via carer support groups; The free Carers Emergency Response Scheme (CERS) organises someone to step in to provide care to the cared-for person in a crisis, giving carers peace of mind.
- Training run by Crossroads and Alzheimers Society to support carers in their caring role, courses run by NSC's Community Learning section, and staff training provided by NSC and NHS North Somerset which carers can access free of charge.
- Financial and benefits advice via Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Advice on flexible working and returning to work provided by Jobcentre Plus.
- Promotion of volunteering as a means of supporting carers to return to work.

Between 1st April 2011 and 31st March 2012, 2,433 adult carers in North Somerset had a Carers Assessment of their own needs arising from the caring role. The majority outcomes of Carers Assessments are that carers indicate they need regular breaks from the responsibilities of the caring role, or from other responsibilities to enable them to focus on the caring role. For those who need it, a Direct Payment can be provided to enable carers to take a break in a way that suits them and enables them to sustain the caring role.

NSC is in the process of commissioning a new Carer Support Service for adult and young carers, joint-funded by NHS North Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group. This is expected to be operational from 1 July 2013.

As a minimum the new adult carer service will:

- pro-actively identify carers,
- provide good quality information and advice at all stages of caring to enable carers to make informed choices about the extent of their caring role,
- deliver an increased number of statutory Carers Assessments and support plans for adults on behalf of the Local Authority,
 - support carers for a time-limited period after their Carers Assessment to implement their support plan,
 - support carers to access Direct Payments from the Local Authority,
 - support carers to access breaks from caring,
 - support carers in the hospital discharge process at Weston General Hospital,
 - ensure carers have access to low-level emotional support,
 - promote carers' involvement in service development and planning,
 - promote awareness of carers' issues to other professionals.

As a minimum the new young carer service will:

- pro-actively identify young carers
- provide good quality information and advice to young carers
- deliver young carers' assessments
- ensure young carers have access to emotional support
- support young carers to move from carer support services to mainstream community life
- raise schools' awareness of young carers
- raise public and professionals' awareness of young carers

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- reduce young carers' isolation and provide them with a break from caring.

NHS North Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group's funding contribution towards the new service includes low-level emotional support for carers and support for carers in the hospital discharge process at Weston General Hospital. They are also providing £250,000 of funding for carers' breaks. This will be made available to carers via a Carer Direct Payment, provided where needed following a Carers Assessment. They are also due to commission Positive Step, a psychological support service specifically for carers, in summer 2013.

In March 2013 a free training course for carers, 'Time for Me', is being piloted in North Somerset. This has been organised by NSC's Community Learning team. It aims to provide carers with practical information and advice for their caring role and to encourage and support them to take care of their own physical and mental health and well-being.

The North Somerset Carers Strategy identifies that further community development work is needed to reach groups of carers with whom professionals have not yet satisfactorily engaged, e.g. BME carers, lesbian and gay carers, male carers⁹.

Community voice

358 local carers participated in the North Somerset Council Carers Survey 2010¹⁰. (Approximately 1100 carers are 'known' to North Somerset Council, Crossroads and Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership in total.) Responses to this indicated that local carers tend to be aged between 45–60. They are more likely than the general population to be self-employed or retired, often have disabilities themselves and tend to have low incomes.

The majority were looking after spouses/partners or parents. The age group of those looked after was predominantly 85 – 90 years old. Nearly half of all carers who answered the question relating to time spent caring responded that they spend more than 100 hours a week doing so. This survey did not include young carers.

In the North Somerset Council Carers Survey 2010, carers rated overall services provided to them as 'good', and their satisfaction level was high.

Key points highlighted in the Survey were:

- Carers find round-the-clock responsibility more demanding than physical caring tasks.
- Many carers see their caring role as part of their relationship with the person they care for and do not identify with the term 'carer'.
- Awareness of some services, such as Carers Emergency Response Scheme (CERS) and advocacy, is low.

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- Carers identified training that will support them in their caring role, such as first aid, manual handling, personal safety, and training that would help them return to work e.g. ICT skills.

Information from carers as to their health needs was also provided by the North Somerset Council Carers Survey 2010. In response to the question ‘How is your health in general?’ 12% of those carers known to Adult Social Services said their health was very good, 35% said it was good, 42% said it was fair, 5% said it was bad, and 1% said it was very bad.

Responses to the question ‘In the last 12 months, has your health been affected by your caring role?’ were as follows:

- Feeling tired – 240 carers.
- Disturbed sleep – 200 carers.
- General feeling of stress - 195 carers.
- Short-tempered/irritable – 149 carers.
- Feeling depressed – 142 carers.
- Physical strain e.g. back pain – 110 carers.

An updated Survey took place in late 2012, the results of which are currently being analysed. Future updates of this chapter will provide analysis of these results.

During an assessment of the local Carers Strategy in 2011, carers said that the first place they would look for information was in their GP surgery. Therefore promoting information in surgeries is likely to increase the numbers of carers identified and subsequently able to access support.

What works

The Government’s November 2010 ‘refresh’ of the National Carers Strategy 2008 states that research shows that ‘effective support to carers usually goes beyond a single intervention and encompasses good quality mainstream services, and sensitive and carer-aware professional practice’. They cite the following links to evidence:

- Kings Fund (2006), *Informal Care in England*, <http://tinyurl.com/informalcare>
- Audit Commission (2004), *The effectiveness and cost effectiveness of support and services to informal carers of older people*, <http://tinyurl.com/effectiveness-supportforcarers>

There is increasing evidence of improved outcomes for carers through the use of Personal Budgets as these offer increased choice and control in terms of how carers are supported¹¹. Department of Health demonstrator sites have been piloting health checks and breaks for carers and the September 2010 interim report on these indicates the strength of their benefit and value for carers¹².

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Recommendations for consideration

These are the key recommendations only. Further action points are identified in the North Somerset Carers Strategy. The North Somerset Carers Strategy was updated in late 2011 to reflect the priorities identified in the 2010 'refresh' of the National Carers Strategy.

- A co-ordinated approach is required between agencies to increase the early identification of carers by promoting information and advice to them before they reach crisis. This should include training of Carers Champions, and Carers Week activities. Particular emphasis is to be given to information in GP surgeries as this is where carers say they look first for information. Information needs to be carefully worded so that phrases do not depend on the term 'carer' initially as many people do not identify with this term.
- Further community development work is needed to reach groups of carers with whom professionals have not yet engaged.
- Free training at North Somerset Council and NHS North Somerset (e.g. stress management, manual handling) and Community Learning courses, need to be publicised to carers to support them in the caring role, and to enable them to acquire skills needed to return to work. Suitable support needs to be provided to the cared-for person to enable the carer to attend.

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Version Control

Date	Author	Version	Amended Sections	Summary of Change	Changes to recommendations
Sept 2011		V 1.0			
Feb 13		V 2.0	All	Updated all sections	

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<http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/pubs/pdf/healthinequalities.pdf>
- ³ Carers UK (2004), *In Poor Health: The Impact of Caring on Health*
<http://tinyurl.com/in-poor-health>
- ⁴ Office for National Statistics, *Census 2011*.
Nationally one in ten of the population are a carer.
<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/index.html>
- ⁵ North Somerset Older Persons' Mental Health Task Group (2009), *Improving mental health and mental health services for older people in North Somerset*.
- ⁶ Department of Health (2010), *Carers in the Region: A Profile of the South West*, page 7.
http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/@ps/documents/digitalasset/dh_113525.pdf
- ⁷ HM Government (2010), *Recognised, valued and supported: next steps for the Carers Strategy*.
http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_122077
- ⁸ HM Government (2008) *Carers at the heart of 21st century families and communities: A caring system on your side, a life of your own*,
<http://tinyurl.com/carers-heart-21C-families>
- ⁹ North Somerset Council and NHS North Somerset (2008), *North Somerset Carers Strategy*.
- ¹⁰ North Somerset Council (2010), *Report on the Survey of Carers in North Somerset*,
<http://consult.n-somerset.gov.uk/consult.ti/caringforothers/consultationHome>
- ¹¹ HM Government (2010), *Carers and personalisation: improving outcomes*
<http://tinyurl.com/carers-personalisation>
- ¹² CIRCLE (2010) *Evaluation of the National Carers Strategy Demonstrator Sites Programme*, University of Leeds
<http://tinyurl.com/carers-strategy-demonstrators>

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